

**The Institution of Engineers, Australia: Sydney Division
Engineering Heritage Committee
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

INTERVIEWEE: Derry HILL

TAPE NUMBERS: IEA SYD: FH28 & FH29

INTERVIEWER: Frank HEIMANS

DATE: 20 April 1999

NUMBER OF TAPES: 2

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: NIL.

LOG PREPARATION: This log was prepared using a Sony TCM-5000 EV cassette recorder

INTERVIEW TAPE LOG

Tape: IEA SYD:FH28, Side A.

TAPE COUNTER	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
000	Start of Tape IEA SYD:FH28 Side A.	
007	Gives his full name, date and place of birth. (Derry Bernard Hill, born Sydney 1935). Says that he was destined not to become a farmer.	Sydney, 1935
017	Recalls that his father always believed that his children should get as good an education as possible. Was accepted into Yanko Agricultural High School where he completed his secondary education and worked on the farm in his holidays.	Yanko Agricultural High School

037	Talks about his maternal grandfather, a George Medal winner and the Senior master of a coastal shipping line. His paternal grandparents owned a farming property near Merriwa. Gives some background of his father who worked as a jackaroo for Ezra Norton, owner of the Daily Mirror.	Samuel Coulter, maternal grandfather. Merriwa Ezra Norton
058	Points out that he had a leaning for Mathematics and Physics, which made him, aspire towards a technical life, eventually leading to Engineering.	
064	Recalls being at Yanko Agricultural High School in the immediate post-war years, completed the Leaving Certificate and won the University Exhibition which gave him a free university education at Sydney University.	University Exhibition
085	Recalls the first morning he arrived in Sydney to start his university course.	Felix Arnott, warden of St Paul's College
099	Took part in university life and spent five years there from 1952 to 1956, living at St Paul's College and completing Science and Civil Engineering degrees.	1952-1956
116	Was conscripted in the Air Force, becoming a pilot over two three-months periods.	Royal Australian Air Force
133	Talks about his sporting activities, winning a 'Blue' in Rugby and playing for Sydney University First Grade Rugby team and later for NSW.	Sydney University Rugby Team
140	Left Australia in 1957 to go to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Business Administration where he did 3 semesters of study until his father took ill and he had to return to Australia.	UCLA School of Business Administration.
151	Took a job at John Lysaght on his return to Australia. Remembers the advice his father gave him on how to optimise his chances of earning a living.	John Lysaght

189	Realised the gap in Engineering as being the lack of fundamental training in business management. Adds that the university Engineering course was really aimed at creating Design Engineers with very few management skills being taught.	
214	Recalls that the only building product that John Lysaght produced when he joined them was a single sheet of corrugated galvanised iron. Became a part of a small group of people designated to expand and develop the company's building products. Worked on the construction of the first AMP Building at Circular Quay, which had metal cellular decking floors, and where he met Alex Wargon who became a lifelong friend.	<p>'Colorbond'</p> <p>Cellular Decking</p> <p>'Kliplok'</p> <p>Ron Meadows, designer at John Lysaght.</p> <p>Alex Wargon, structural designer of first AMP Building.</p>
270	Talks about the monopoly that BHP had on steel products and how they would generate competition using their own sheet steel products. Mentions a lack of marketing skills within BHP management.	Brownbuilt Roofing
297	Learned about accounting and finance and undertook many feasibility studies for BHP, giving him good training. Remarks on the lack of business management schools in Australia at the time he went to UCLA.	
330	Mentions the post-war shortages of goods and gives the example of his father who in 1947 ordered a Chevrolet car, taking delivery of it in 1956.	Sterling Motors, Dubbo.
346	Made a decision to leave Lysaght in 1966 after the Board did not proceed with a proposition put to it to take an interest in a project to produce iron ore in Hamersley WA in competition with BHP.	<p>Art Woodward of Kaiser Steel and Aluminum Group.</p> <p>Hamersley, WA</p>

385	After a stint with Merck Pharmaceuticals as a Business Consultant, was recruited by Dillingham Corporation where he ran a division in shipping and shipbuilding, ultimately becoming Managing Director and Chairman of that company.	Merck Pharmaceuticals Dillingham Corporation
400	Gives more details of his position at Dillingham in the Marine Division from 1968 to 1972.	John Burke Line Dredging Industries
425	End of Tape IEA SYD:FH28 side A	

Tape: IEA SYD:FH28, Side B.

002	Continuation of interview with Derry Hill	
005	Gives a brief history of Dillingham Constructions, its activities and some of its key personnel.	Hawaii Dredging Lowell Dillingham Ron Evans, Engineer at Dillingham Const.
040	Talks about his involvement with the construction of the Qantas Head Office Building in Sydney and its complicated legal case.	Qantas Head Office Building. Sydney
049	Mentions the Fraser Island mining controversy, which he believes was a trade-off between Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and the Environmental movement over uranium mining in the NT.	Fraser Island Malcolm Fraser, PM
058	Discusses a project for the World Bank, (the construction of the road between Suva and Nadi) and construction of a large power station in northern Pakistan for the Asian Development Bank as well as a project in Papua New Guinea which was undertaken by Dillingham.	Tarbela Dam on the Indus River

070	Reveals that as Managing Director of Dillingham Corporation during the Fraser Island controversy, he had a pivotal role in the development and resolve of the controversy. Regrets that Malcolm Fraser was not interested in the logic of it all and that it became obvious that a deal had been done. Thinks that the Fraser Island controversy became too much of an emotive issue.	Keith Newman, Minister for the Environment, Fraser Government. Doug Anthony, Deputy PM Rex Connor, Former Minister in Whitlam Government.
097	Gives an account of the dispute with the BLF surrounding the construction of the Qantas Head Office Building during which the site was closed for 17 weeks over site allowance disputes. Says that the legal case went on for years.	BLF (Builders Labourers Federation) Sir Lenox Hewitt, Chairman of Qantas
139	Describes the design of the Qantas Building and its unique construction, with four large flagpoles at each end of the building, large concrete trusses and cables from which floors were suspended. Describes the load distribution of the building.	Joceland and Gilling, Architects of the Qantas Head Office Building
169	Thinks that the Qantas Building has an interesting design, but feels that the cost by far outweighed the benefits.	
181	Evaluates and defines his role as Managing Director of Dillingham Corporation, Asia and Pacific.	
206	Believes that the biggest problem he faced at Dillingham was the Fraser Island controversy, dealing with the Federal Public Service and politicians. Says that the problems Dillingham experienced were expounded because it was a foreign company.	
226	Gives his reasons for leaving Dillingham Corporation. Adds that Dillingham Corporation Asia Pacific was taken over and liquidated after he left the company.	Kohlberg, Kravis and Roberts, Leveraged Buy-Out Specialists, US.

264	Started a joint venture, Triton Financial Trust, with another ex-Dillingham executive from California and set up development projects in Australia and California. Describes a project at Helensvale, where the company bought a dairy farm, which was rezoned into residential land and sold to the public.	Triton Financial Trust Helensvale Qld.
282	Was asked to join Accor Asia Pacific, a company, which had the rights to build the Novotel Hotels. Retired from Accor at the age of 63 and then joined Reed Constructions Australia where he is currently Chairman.	Accor Asia Pacific Group Reed Constructions Australia.
306	Talks about his role as Chairman of Western Resources and Moruya Gold Mines between 1980 and 1984.	John Naylor
335	Mentions his two partners (US and Canadian) in the Moruya Gold Mines venture and the low grade-high volume gold mining in the Black Hills of South Dakota, a huge open-cut operation.	South Dakota, US Anaconda Mining
395	Thinks that his Engineering training was invaluable in financial management.	
412	End of Tape IEA:SYD:FH28 Side B	

Tape: IEA SYD:FH29, Side A.

002	Continuation of interview with Derry Hill	
006	Gives an account of how he started Moruya Gold Mines and provides details of the operation of the mine. Was concerned about the use of cyanide in the bleaching process and explains the precautions taken against environmental damage.	Cyanide used in gold mining
052	Compares the environmental protection laws of Queensland and South Dakota and concludes that Queensland's laws were less strict than those of South Dakota's.	Queensland South Dakota
065	Thinks that today's mining companies are responsible in dealing with the problems of chemical pollution and that processes have improved.	
083	Relates that Accor entered the Australian hotel business with the Novotel at Darling Harbour and had big plans for the construction of other hotels in Australia and Asia. Brought together a team to plan, construct and convert/renovate these hotels. Was General Manager of Construction and Development at Accor Asia Pacific and his responsibility covered all aspects of acquisition, development and construction.	Darling Harbour Roturua NZ China
116	Confirms that the secret of the Novotel philosophy is standardisation of facilities and service.	
124	Defines what the term 'Asset Management' means in the hotel industry.	Asset Management
146	Explains that the Accor Group identified a gap in the market of 3 and 4 star hotels and concentrated on that sector.	

162	Stresses the importance of maintaining standards in hotel rooms at a high level, because room rates and return on assets will reduce otherwise.	NRMA Rating.
177	Details the refurbishment process for hotels at periodic intervals.	
202	Announces that the Asian Crisis left 13 projects partly-constructed and that these were shut down, waiting for better times. Decided to retire from the Accor Group in December 1997.	
210	Describes life after the Accor Group and joining Reed Constructions. Gives advice to other, younger engineers.	
227	Explains the operations of Reed Constructions: the building of bridges and commercial buildings, and providing completion guarantees for other building companies.	
256	Thinks that the most exciting part of his life was when he was running Dillingham Asia Pacific. Regrets that he did not spend enough time with his wife and children during that time.	Dimity Hill
270	Reveals that the most difficult decision he had to make was whether to leave his job with John Lysaght.	
289	Believes that his greatest coup in business was the Helensvale land rezoning project, which was financially very successful. Also mentions the 3-4 years that he spent transforming Dillingham from a disparate foreign company to a coordinated group as very satisfying.	Helensvale, Q.
315	Is disappointed that the Federal Government under Malcolm Fraser's Prime Ministership did not follow its own constitutional rules in the Fraser Island matter.	Fraser Island.

333	Believes that objectivity is the single most important characteristic needed in business. Thinks that when subjectivity enters the decision-making process, things go awry.	Objectivity
358	Remarks that intuition has played a role in making his decisions.	Intuition
372	Advises that management training would be a useful skill in the education of engineers today.	Management Training
396	End of interview with Derry Hill and end of Tape IEA SYD:FH29 Side A NB: Tape IEA SYD:FH29 Side B not recorded.	